

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /011 R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 301943

FOR USDEL CAIRO, SHERMAN

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: BEGIN VISIT - BACKGROUND BRIEFING

1. FOLLOWING IS EDITED VERSION OF BACKGROUND BRIEFING,
FOR ATTRIBUTION TO WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL, GIVEN AT THE WHITE
HOUSE, DECEMBER 17, AT 9:20 P.M.

OFFICIAL: WE ARE NOT AND ARE NOT GOING TO BE IN THE POSI-
TION OF COMMENTING ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF ANY PROPOSALS OR
SUGGESTIONS OR IDEAS THAT WERE DISCUSSED. IT IS OUR VIEW
THAT IT WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND PREMATURE IN LIGHT
OF THE UPCOMING DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER BEGIN
AND PRESIDENT SADAT AND OF THE FACT THAT, AS WE HAVE SAID
ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, THAT AGREEMENTS WHICH PRODUCE PEACE
HAVE TO BE REACHED BETWEEN THE PARTIES INVOLVED.

OUR ROLE IS ONE OF LISTENING. IT IS ONE OF DISCUSSING. IT
IS ONE OF SUGGESTING POSSIBILITIES FOR PROGRESS AND ACCOM-
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WHERE WE CAN, THE PARTIES TO FIND WAYS TO MOVE CLOSER
TOGETHER.

I WILL SAY THAT IN THAT CONTEXT WE FEEL THAT THESE DIS-
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THERE IS OBVIOUSLY WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IN THIS
AREA OF THE WORLD, BUT THE PROCESS MOVES FORWARD IN THESE
MEETINGS AND THESE DISCUSSIONS WERE A STEP FORWARD.

I MIGHT SAY GENERALLY ABOUT THE DISCUSSIONS THAT THE APPROACH EVIDENCED BY PRIME MINISTER BEGIN DOES SHOW THE ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY WHICH WAS COMMENTED UPON, I BELIEVE, FOLLOWING SECRETARY VANCE'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM. THIS APPROACH IS A STEP TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION. ADDITIONAL STEPS, OBVIOUSLY, WILL BE NECESSARY. BUT, IN GENERAL, THE IDEAS DISCUSSED OVER THE PAST TWO DAYS, IF THEY ARE PURSUED IN THE PROPER SPIRIT, CAN SERVE AS CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

I WOULD LIKE TO ADD ONE OTHER COMMENT, AND THEN I WILL TRY TO RESPOND TO A FEW QUESTIONS THAT I HAVEN'T ALREADY ANTICIPATED AND ANSWERED -- AND THAT IS THAT UNAVOIDABLY THERE WILL BE ATTEMPTS TO WRITE ABOUT PROPOSALS AND PLANS THAT ARE NOT KNOWN ABOUT.

I WOULD SIMPLY URGE IN A RATHER DELICATE SPIRIT HERE SOME DEGREE OF CAUTION AND RESTRAINT IN WRITING ABOUT THINGS THAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT. JUST THE QUERIES THAT I AM FAMILIAR WITH AND THE SPECULATION THAT I AM FAMILIAR WITH, MOST OF WHICH FORTUNATELY I HAVE NOT SEEN PRINT OVER THE PAST DAY OR SO, SOME OF IT, QUITE UNCLASSIFIED

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A BIT OF IT IS QUITE APART FROM THE FACTS. I THINK ATTEMPTS TO BE AUTHORITATIVE AND ANALYZING AND PRESENTING INFORMATION WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE CORRECT DOES HAVE THE POTENTIAL, AS YOU KNOW BETTER THAN I, TO BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

Q: YOU STARTED OFF SAYING IT WAS NOT OUR ROLE TO PRO-
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OFFICIAL: I AM SAYING THAT IT IS NOT OUR ROLE, CERTAINLY PUBLICLY, AND EVEN IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS THE PRESIDENT HAS POINTED OUT--I BELIEVE IN HIS LAST NEWS CONFERENCE -- THAT HE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT HESITATE IN A SITUATION PRIVATELY -- THAT HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO MAKE HIS VIEWS KNOWN PRIVATELY. BUT FRANKLY, WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH A SORT OF SITUATION IN WHICH -- AND

I THINK IT IS A MARK OF THE PROGRESS WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS AND THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS -- THAT WE ARE NOT DEALING HERE WITH A SITUATION IN WHICH IDEAS ARE ACCEPTED OR REJECTED. WE ARE DEALING WITH A SITUATION IN WHICH THEY ARE DISCUSSED AND WHICH THERE IS AN ATTEMPT TO CONSULT ABOUT WHERE THEY OFFER POSSIBILITIES

FOR PROGRESS AND PEACE, WHERE PROBLEMS MIGHT ARISE, WHERE THIS OR THAT PARTICULAR PARTY MIGHT HAVE A CONCERN OR A SENSITIVITY THAT EITHER IS OR IS NOT ALLEVIATED BY A PARTICULAR SUGGESTION. SO IT IS A MUCH MORE COMPLEX, A MUCH MORE, I THINK, PRODUCTIVE, AND A MUCH MORE SOPHISTICATED PROCESS THAN ONE OF ACCEPTING OR REJECTING IDEAS.

Q: YOU SEEM TO BE SUGGESTING THAT IN THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT AT HIS NEWS CONFERENCE THAT HE WOULD NOT HESITATE
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TO TELL BEGIN IF IT WENT FAR ENOUGH OR IT DIDN'T GO FAR ENOUGH - ARE YOU NOW SUGGESTING THE PRESIDENT DIDN'T COME TO THESE TERMS?

OFFICIAL: WHAT I AM SAYING IS, I DON'T BELIEVE THOSE ARE EXACTLY THE PRESIDENT'S WORDS. WHAT I SAID WAS THAT THE PROCESS IN WHICH WE ARE IN NOW, FRANKLY, IS NOT ONE IN WHICH THAT SORT OF THING IS REQUIRED BECAUSE WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH THE SORTS OF IDEAS AND THE SITUATION THAT REQUIRES OR THAT WOULD CALL THAT INTO PLAY.

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Q: BACK IN YOUR STATEMENT YOU SAID IT WAS A CONSTRUCTIVE STEP AND YOU SAID ADDITIONAL STEPS WOULD BE NECESSARY. DO YOU MEAN ADDITIONAL STEPS BY ALL THE PARTIES, OR DO YOU ADDITIONAL ISRAELI STEPS? YOU LEFT IT AMBIGUOUS AND I THINK WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO CLEAR THAT UP IF YOU CAN.

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Q: ADDITIONAL STEPS ON HOW MANY COUNTRIES' PARTS OR JUST ONE COUNTRY?

OFFICIAL: I HAVE NO DESIRE TO TRY TO IDENTIFY WHO NEEDS TO DO WHAT WHEN. I WAS JUST STATING THE OBVIOUS, AND IT SHOULD NOT BE OVERLY INTERPRETED; THAT IF YOU SAY AS WE DO THAT IDEAS AND PROPOSALS CAN SERVE AS CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR NEGOTIATION, THAT OBVIOUSLY YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT A PROCESS THAT IS ONGOING, STEPS FORWARD, AND YOU ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT A COMPLETED PROCESS.
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OFFICIAL: YOU CAN JUST USE WHAT I SAID, WITHOUT INTERPRETATION. I WILL BE HAPPY. OBVIOUSLY, AS I THINK I MADE CLEAR, I WAS NOT ATTEMPTING TO SINGLE OUT INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR TO DEAL WITH WHO NEEDS TO DO WHAT WHEN.

Q: IS THERE MORE TO THE BEGIN SUGGESTIONS AND PROPOSALS THAN HAS APPEARED IN THE PRESS? IS THAT WHY YOU ARE SAYING ONE SHOULDN'T TAKE THE VARIOUS LEAKS SERIOUSLY?

OFFICIAL: THERE IS MORE, THERE IS LESS, THERE IS DIFFERENCE, AND I REALLY HAVEN'T TRIED TO KEEP TRACK OF EVERYTHING. I DIDN'T MEAN AT ALL TO BE IN A POSITION -- WHICH I AM SURE IT DID PROBABLY SOUND LIKE -- OF TELLING YOU HOW TO DO YOUR JOB. BECAUSE YOU ALL HAVE DEALT WITH THESE SITUATIONS MORE OFTEN THAN I.

Q: I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ANOTHER POINT. DID THE PRESIDENT RELAY HIS APPRAISAL TO SADAT AT ALL ON THIS PEACE PLAN?

OFFICIAL: I DON'T KNOW ANY DETAILS OF WHAT THE PRESIDENT MAY HAVE SAID.

Q: WAS SADAT'S APPRAISAL SENT BACK TO BEGIN? SADAT SAID IN CAIRO TODAY THAT HE HAD SENT A REPLY TO THE POINTS THAT CARTER GAVE HIM YESTERDAY. WAS THAT REPLY CONVEYED TO BEGIN TONIGHT?
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Q: WERE THERE ANY PHONE CALLS BETWEEN CARTER AND SADAT TODAY?

OFFICIAL: I DON'T BELIEVE THERE WERE. I AM SURE THERE WILL BE CONTINUED CONTACT. WHETHER THERE WILL BE A DIRECT CONVERSATION OR NOT IS SOMETHING I JUST DON'T KNOW.

Q: DOES THIS PLAN INCLUDE ALL PARTIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

OFFICIAL: THERE IS NO WAY ON EARTH THAT I AM GOING TO DEPART FROM WHAT I SAID BEFORE IN THE SENSE OF DISCUS-
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SING ANY OF THE DETAILS OF THE PROPOSALS AND THE IDEAS THAT WERE PRESENTED. I DID SAY THAT THOSE DID CONSTITUTE A STEP FORWARD TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION. I WILL JUST LEAVE IT AT THAT.

Q: IN THE STATEMENT WHERE YOU TALKED ABOUT THE PRIME MINISTER'S CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH, DOES THAT MEAN A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH IN THE PROPOSALS? DID THE CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH REFER TO THE PROPOSALS HE MADE?

OFFICIAL: WE WERE ATTEMPTING HERE TO USE A BROADER, NOT A NARROWER, TERM, REFERRING TO THE SUM TOTAL OR TO THE PROPOSALS, TO IDEAS, TO THE TONE AND SO FORTH.

Q: WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER WAS IN THERE IN THE OVAL OFFICE, SOMEONE ASKED HIM, "WHAT IS THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO YOUR PROPOSALS?" AND HE SAID, "WE WILL KNOW IN A MINUTE." IS THERE ANY WAY IN PURE GEORGIA ENGLISH THAT YOU CAN TELL US HOW THE PRESIDENT FEELS ABOUT ALL THIS? IS HE OPTIMISTIC? IS HE ENCOURAGED? WHAT IS HE?

OFFICIAL: I WILL CERTAINLY SAY THAT THE DISCUSSIONS WERE ENCOURAGING, YES. AND CERTAINLY I THINK THERE IS A BASIC OPTIMISM HERE THAT IS HELPED BY THE FACT

THAT IT IS A STEP FORWARD, THAT WE DO FEEL THAT THE DISCUSSIONS WERE CONSTRUCTIVE AND SO FORTH. WE USE WORDS LIKE THAT IN GEORGIA.

Q: HAS THE THING WHICH HAPPENED TODAY ALTERED WHAT YOU TOLD US YESTERDAY ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S TRAVEL PLANS? YOU SAID YESTERDAY YOU DIDN'T KNOW OF ANY PLANS TO DIVERT.

OFFICIAL: NO, I HAVE HEARD NOTHING TODAY THAT WOULD ALTER THAT AND I AM AWARE OF NOTHING.
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Q: YOU TOOK A QUESTION YESTERDAY ABOUT AN INVITATION TO SADAT TO COME TO WASHINGTON.

OFFICIAL: I DIDN'T CHECK THAT OUT.

Q: IS IT FAIR TO SAY PRIME MINISTER BEGIN LEFT HERE TONIGHT HAVING HEARD SOME FEEDBACK ABOUT WHATEVER IT IS HE BROUGHT ON FRIDAY?

OFFICIAL: I DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD PARTICULARLY ADOPT YOUR TERM. OUR ROLE IS ONE OF LISTENING, OF DISCUSSING, OF SUGGESTING POSSIBILITIES FOR ACCOMMODATION AND MOVING THINGS FORWARD. THAT IS WHAT TOOK PLACE TONIGHT.

Q: HOW LONG WERE THEY TOGETHER ALONE?

OFFICIAL: ABOUT 20 MINUTES. HE LEFT THE OVAL OFFICE. THE MEETING IN THE CABINET ROOM BROKE UP ABOUT 8:35 AND HE LEFT THE OVAL OFFICE AND WALKED DIRECTLY OUTSIDE. SO FROM ABOUT 8:35 UNTIL JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE YOU SAW HIM OUTSIDE, THEY WERE MEETING AGAIN. I THINK THAT WAS ABOUT 20 MINUTES, MAYBE A FEW MINUTES MORE.

Q: WAS THE PLAN DISCUSSED BY THE PRIME MINISTER TONIGHT ESSENTIALLY IDENTICAL TO THE ONE HE HAD YESTERDAY? IN OTHER WORDS, WERE THERE ANY CHANGES IN HIS PROPOSAL OVER-NIGHT AS A RESULT OF YESTERDAY'S MEETING?

OFFICIAL: I AM NOT SURE EXACTLY HOW TO ANSWER THAT. LET ME SAY WITHOUT BEING QUITE THAT SPECIFIC ABOUT IT, THAT IT DID APPEAR TO ME THAT THERE WAS IN OUR THINKING, AND IN THEIR THINKING TODAY, A REFLECTION OF THE POINTS THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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WERE MADE BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS YESTERDAY, AND I THINK IN THE DISCUSSIONS THAT HAVE GONE ON, THAT WENT ON AT OTHER LEVELS DURING THE INTERVENING PERIOD.

WE SAID YESTERDAY DURING THIS INTERVENING PERIOD WE WOULD BE ABLE TO GET A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF THESE IDEAS. THAT, INDEED, IS WHAT HAPPENDED. AND IN THE DISCUSSIONS TODAY THAT FULLER UNDERSTANDING, I THINK, WAS REFLECTED IN THE APPROACHES TAKEN BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS.

Q: IN THIS CONNECTION, WILL YOU MAKE CLEAR TO US THAT THERE WERE NO COMMUNICATIONS, AS YOU UNDERSTAND IT, FROM THE TIME THE PRESIDENT SPOKE WITH PRESIDENT SADAT YESTERDAY, INCLUDING UP TO NOW, IN THE DISCUSSION WITH MR. BEGIN?

OFFICIAL: NO, I CAN'T SAY THAT AT ALL. ALL I CAN SAY
IS THAT THERE WAS, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, NO DIRECT PHONE CALLS.
I WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THERE WERE OTHER COMMUNICA-
TIONS. I THINK THERE WAS SOME INDICATION THERE WERE.
BUT NO SO FAR AS I KNOW BY DIRECT PHONE CALL. AND I THINK
THAT IS CORRECT.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US, THIS PRIVATE CONVERSATION THAT TOOK
PLACE AT THE END OF TONIGHT'S SESSION, WHO SUGGESTED
THAT?

OFFICIAL: I THINK PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, BUT I AM REALLY
NOT SURE ABOUT THAT. PERHAPS I SHOULD JUST SAY I DON'T
KNOW BECAUSE I AM NOT SURE ENOUGH TO SAY THAT. BUT
IT DIDN'T SEEM TO ME THAT EITHER ONE HAD TO HAVE THEIR
ARM TWISTED. VANCE

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TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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USINT BAGHDAD
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AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
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UNCLAS STATE 301943

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

FOL RPT STATE 301943 SENT ACTION CAIRO DTD 19 DEC 7

QUOTE: UNCLAS STATE 301943

FOR USDEL CAIRO, SHERMAN

E.O. 11652:N/A

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Q: WAS SADAT'S APPRAISAL SENT BACK TO BEGIN? SADAT UNCLASSIFIED

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SAID IN CAIRO TODAY THAT HE HAD SENT A REPLY TO THE POINTS THAT CARTER GAVE HIM YESTERDAY. WAS THAT REPLY CONVEYED TO BEGIN TONIGHT?

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Q: WERE THERE ANY PHONE CALLS BETWEEN CARTER AND SADAT TODAY?

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OFFICIAL: NO, I HAVE HEARD NOTHING TODAY THAT WOULD
ALTER THAT AND I AM AWARE O NOTHING.

Q: YOU TOOK A QUESTION YESTERDAY ABOUT AN INVITATION TO
SADAT TO COME TO WASHINGTON.

OFFICIAL: I DIDN'T CHECK THAT OUT.

Q: IS IT FAIR TO SAY PRIME MINISTER BEGIN LEFT HERE
TONIGHT HAVING HEARD SOME FEEDBACK ABOUT WHATEVER IT IS
HE BROUGHT ON FRIDAY?

OFFICIAL: I DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD PARTICULARLY ADOPT
YOUR TERM. OUR ROLE IS ONE OF LISTENING, OF DISCUSSING,
OF SUGGESTING POSSIBILITIES FOR ACCOMMODATION AND MOVING
THINGS FORWARD. THAT IS WHAT TOOK PLACE TONIGHT.

Q: HOW LONG WERE THEY TOGETHER ALONE?

OFFICIAL: ABOUT 20 MINUTES. HE LEFT THE OVAL OFFICE.
THE MEETING IN THE CABINET ROOM BROKE UP ABOUT 8:35
AND HE LEFT THE OVAL OFFICE AND WALKED DIRECTLY OUTSIDE.
SO FROM ABOUT 8:35 UNTIL JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE YOU
SAW HIM OUTSIDE, THEY WERE MEETING AGAIN. I THINK THAT
WAS ABOUT 20 MINUTES, MAYBE A FEW MINUTES MORE.

Q: WAS THE PLAN DISCUSSED BY THE PRIME MINISTER TONIGHT
ESSENTIALLY IDENTICAL TO THE ONE HE HAD YESTERDAY? IN
OTHER WORDS, WERE THERE ANY CHANGES IN HIS PROPOSAL OVER-
NIGHT AS A RESULT OF YESTERDAY'S MEETING?

OFFICIAL: I AM NOT SURE EXACTLY HOW TO ANSWER THAT. LET
ME SAY WITHOUT BEING QUITE THAT SPECIFIC ABOUT IT, THAT
IT DID APPEAR TO ME THAT THERE WAS IN OUR THINKING, AND IN
THEIR THINKING TODAY, A REFLECTION OF THE POINTS THAT
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WERE MADE BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS YESTERDAY, AND I THINK IN
THE DISCUSSIONS THAT HAVE GONE ON, THAT WENT ON AT OTHER
LEVELS DURING THE INTERVENING PERIOD.

WE SAID YESTERDAY DURING THIS INTERVENING PERIOD WE
WOULD BE ABLE TO GET A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF THESE
IDEAS. THAT, INDEED, IS WHAT HAPPENDED. AND IN THE DIS-
CUSSIONS TODAY THAT FULLER UNDERSTANDING, I THINK, WAS
REFLECTED IN THE APPROACHES TAKEN BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS.

Q: IN THIS CONNECTION, WILL YOU MAKE CLEAR TO US THAT THERE WERE NO COMMUNICATIONS, AS YOU UNDERSTAND IT, FROM THE TIME THE PRESIDENT SPOKE WITH PRESIDENT SADAT YESTERDAY, INCLUDING UP TO NOW, IN THE DISCUSSION WITH MR. BEGIN?

OFFICIAL: NO, I CAN'T SAY THAT AT ALL. ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT THERE WAS, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, NO DIRECT PHONE CALLS. I WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THERE WERE OTHER COMMUNICATIONS. I THINK THERE WAS SOME INDICATION THERE WERE. BUT NO SO FAR AS I KNOW BY DIRECT PHONE CALL. AND I THINK THAT IS CORRECT.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US, THIS PRIVATE CONVERSATION THAT TOOK PLACE AT THE END OF TONIGHT'S SESSION, WHO SUGGESTED THAT?

OFFICIAL: I THINK PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, BUT I AM REALLY NOT SURE ABOUT THAT. PERHAPS I SHOULD JUST SAY I DON'T KNOW BECAUSE I AM NOT SURE ENOUGH TO SAY THAT. BUT IT DIDN'T SEEM TO ME THAT EITHER ONE HAD TO HAVE THEIR ARM TWISTED. VANCE UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 19-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE301943
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/P:REUNDELAND:DP:
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770472-1138
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197712111/baaaeusn.tel
Line Count: 728
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
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Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 14
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 119700
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BEGIN VISIT - BACKGROUND BRIEFING
TAGS: PFOR
To: CAIRO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/01f65dfc-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009